

Knowledge, Skills and Attitude (KSA) of Faculty Members in Recognizing Mental Health Issues among College Students

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ABSTRACT

Background: Mental health issues have become a growing crisis confronting many universities worldwide. The academic environment greatly impacts the students' mental and psychological well-being. In this aspect, faculty members are challenged in honing the students' mental health. **Objectives:** This study aimed to determine the knowledge, skills, and attitude (KSA) as well as the barriers in recognizing students' mental health inside the campus among faculty members of Mindanao State University- Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT). Furthermore, this study seeks to gain insight into the significant relationship between the demographic profile and their knowledge, skills, and attitude towards student's mental health. **Methods:** The study was designed as descriptive-correlation research which utilized proportional allocation to determine eighty-four (84) respondents who were faculty members from the seven (7) colleges of MSU-IIT. The respondents answered a modified questionnaire divided into five (5) categories which the researchers have determined. **Results:** The results revealed that among the mental health issues, faculty members are most familiar with depression (92%). The results showed that 56% agreed that it is the teacher's job to promote mental health and that they have a significant role in addressing this issue yet only 32% have received training regarding the topic. In addition, the results portray that there is an interest among the faculty regarding mental health promotion inside the campus, however, only 39% are happy promoting student's mental health. The low priority given to mental health promotion was considered to be a barrier to faculty intervention. Among the variables, educational attainment has shown to have a significant relationship with knowledge and skills. **Conclusion:** Hence, the institute needs to recognize and act on enhancing the promotion of mental health in the campus.

Keywords: *Universities; Mental Health; Philippines; Faculty; Students*

INTRODUCTION

Mental health issues are expanding and are significantly adding to the global weight of diseases and disabilities around the world with depression on the lead among the youth (WHO, 2020). Study suggests that half of the mental health problems begin at 14 years of age (Sorel, 2010) with suicide as the second leading cause of mortality among adolescents (WHO, 2020). In the Philippines, mental disability has ranked as the 3rd most common form of morbidity among Filipinos according to the National Statistics Office (Lally, Tully & Samaniego, 2019).

Adolescent years are mostly spent in schools and universities wherein college students' academe

environment influences their state of mental health (Cleofas, 2020). In preparing the students to meet the increasing psychological demands in today's educational environment, additional support must be provided not only from guidance counselors but also from faculty members. Educators have acknowledged the impact of mental health on the learning and success of the students; however, faculty members are not provided with methodologies and training needed to combat the growing challenges (Brzycki, 2016).

Being an educator is a challenging job because one of roles of an educator is to guide and consider the students' ability to handle daily life demands and problems. Educators must also look at a student's ability

to communicate effectively and understand their thoughts and feelings. Developing a culture of acceptance and belonging is an essential preventive measure in a classroom setting which educators must strive to attain (Meldrum, Venn & Kutcher, 2009).

Cases of student suicides from previous years have been reported in Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU – IIT), reasons for which are kept confidential. Thus, it is important that the faculty members be capable of determining the signs and symptoms of mental problems for them to act accordingly when the situation calls. This present study aims to seek information about the faculty members' knowledge, skills, and attitude in recognizing health issues among students including the barriers in recognizing students' mental health. Furthermore, this study determines the significant relationship between the faculty members' demographic profile and their knowledge, skills, and attitude towards student's mental health. The recognition of this serious matter is a step closer to a greater understanding of the impact of mental health on the academic success of the students.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study used a descriptive - correlational research design. It described the demographic profile of the respondents (age, sex, marital status educational attainment, and years in teaching), knowledge, skills, and attitude including barriers in recognizing mental health issues of the students. The study also looked into the relationships among the variables.

Participant

The participants of the study comprised of 84 faculty members from the seven (7) different colleges of MSU-IIT selected through proportional stratified random sampling to ensure that all faculty members from the different colleges were adequately represented. Inclusion criteria were faculty members of every college who are actively working in the university with 18 units and above with high teaching load. Faculty members on study leave during the data collection and those handling less than 18 units teaching load were excluded. List of faculty members was obtained from the Human Resource Management Office and were selected using a random number generator.

Instrument

The researchers used a modified questionnaire designed to collect data needed in determining the knowledge, skills, and attitude of MSU-IIT faculty members in recognizing the mental health issues of the students. Originally, the questionnaire came from the two studies entitled “Middle School Teachers’ Attitudes and Perceptions about their Role in Promoting Pupils’ Mental Health in the state of Kuwait” (Alradaan, 2012), and “2014 Ontario Child Health Study: Teacher Survey Grades 6 to 12” (Boyle *et al.*, 2019). Relevant questions from the two studies were categorized according to knowledge, skills, and attitude as well as barriers about students’ mental health.

Part I of the questionnaire identifies the demographic profile of MSU-IIT faculty in terms of age, sex, marital status, educational attainment and length of service. Part II measures the knowledge of MSU- IIT faculty about students’ mental health with five (5) questions on four-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree and one (1) question on the mental health issues the respondents are familiar with using check all that applies (CATA). Part III identifies the skills of the faculty in recognizing the mental health issues of the students with eight (8) questions answerable by yes or no. Part IV contained the faculty's attitude about student mental health with five (5) questions using attitude scale. Lastly, Part V indicates the barriers to addressing student mental health issues in school using five-point Likert scale. To establish the internal consistency reliability of the research instrument, it was subjected to a pilot testing study with Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.7 for knowledge variables and 0.9 for skills, attitude and barriers variables which indicate a high level of consistency of questions.

Data Collection

The researcher sent letters to the Deans of the different colleges with the names of the randomly selected faculty members to request permission to conduct the study. After the approval, the researchers contacted the target respondents for permission to participate in the study. Before answering the questionnaire, participants were directed to carefully read the instructions and sign the research participation informed consent form. The participants were given

ample time to answer the questionnaire and raise questions to the researchers as necessary.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage and mode were used to describe the variables in the study. To test the relationship among the variables, the Chi Square test was utilized. Chi-Square is a statistical hypothesis test that would determine the relationship between two variables. The researchers made use of the SPSS version 21 software for data processing.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical issues are highly considered during the course of the study. Approval from the Ethics Committee of the College was obtained prior to the conduct of the study with code number E-2018-25 on September 24, 2018. Moreover, the researchers sought informed consent from all participants detailing what the study is all about and its objectives, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, it's risks and benefits, their right to withdraw and that there is no compensation in participating in the study. They were also informed that the result of the study will be shared to the community, conferences and might be published so that other interested individuals or groups may learn from the study.

RESULTS

Profile of the Participants

Most of the participants belong to young and middle adults from the age-range of 20-30 years old (31%) and 31- 40 years old (35%). The participants were equally divided for male and female. Most of the respondents are married (62%), Master's graduate (64%) and with more than 5 years of experience in teaching (63%).

Knowledge on Promoting Students' Mental Health

The top three mental health issues that faculty members are most familiar with are depression (92%), anxiety (79%), and bipolar disorder (61%). Most of the participants strongly agree (69%) that a mentally healthy person is someone who can cope, adjust and adapt to life's stressors, changes and challenges. They also strongly agree (74%) that it is the right and the need of young people to be mentally healthy. Fifty-one percent agree while 42% strongly agree that early intervention can help one recover from mental problems. However, only 43% strongly agree that

promoting and supporting students' mental health required teachers to be trained in specific skills and have adequate knowledge on mental health issues. When asked if it is not the job of educators to promote students' mental health in the classroom, only 38% strongly disagreed while 44% disagreed.

Skills on Recognizing Students' Mental Health Issues

When asked about the skills training on promoting students' mental health in the past two years, the faculty members were honest enough to answer that they did not attend skills training on creating a mentally healthy classroom (68%), managing behaviour problems in the classroom (61%), reducing stigma related to mental health problems (74%). In addition, most of them did not participate on skills training regarding assisting students to access help for mental health problems (64%), mental health issues or substance abuse (63%), and about bullying and victimization (70%). However, a little more than half of them participated in seminars about physical, sexual or emotional abuse (54%), and sexual harassment and dating violence (51%).

Attitude on Recognizing Students' Mental Health

Faculty members expressed varying attitude in terms of recognizing students' mental health. Most of them would feel interested (42%) if a student with mental health issues joined their class. Similarly, they would feel interested (40%) in recognizing the mental health problem of the student. The respondents were optimistic (30%) when there is a student dealing with mental health problems in the classroom and the same feeling of optimism (46%) when managing a class which includes students with mental health issues. When it comes to promoting student's mental health 39% felt happy doing it.

Barriers on Addressing Students' Mental Health

Result revealed that 39% strongly agree that mental health concerns were given low priority in the institute compared to other initiatives. Also, 39% of the respondents believed that language and cultural barriers may hinder mental health promotion. However, many of the participants answered that they are unaware (46%) if the lack of adequate staff training is a barrier to the promotion of mental health. The majority of the respondents also answered that they don't know (42%) if stigma is a barrier. Lastly, they don't know (44%) as well if lack of contact between the school and parents is a

barrier.

Relationship among Variables

Among the demographic profile, table 1 indicates that there is a significant relationship between the faculty members’ knowledge and their educational attainment. Faculty members’ knowledge regarding mental health differs from those with master’s degree to those with doctorate degree.

Table 1: Chi-Square Test for Participants’ Demographic Profile and their Knowledge on Students Mental Health

	Demographic Profile	Sig. Value	Remarks
Knowledge	Age	0.210	No significant relationship
	Sex	0.437	No significant relationship
	Marital Status	0.809	No significant relationship
	Educational Attainment	0.000	Has significant relationship
	Length of Service	0.742	No significant relationship

Whereas, table 2 revealed that age, marital status, educational attainment and years of teaching have significant relationships with the skills of the participants in recognizing mental health of students. Cross tabulation of data revealed that those who have more skills training were within 20-30 years old, single, with Master's degree and serving the institute for more than five years already.

Table 2: Chi-Square Test for Participants' Demographic Profile and their Skills on Students Mental Health

	Demographic Profile	Sig. value	Remarks
Skills	Age	0.018	Has Significant Relationship
	Sex	0.080	No Significant Relationship
	Marital Status	0.045	Has Significant Relationship
	Educational Attainment	0.053	Has Significant Relationship
	Years of Teaching Experience	0.010	Has Significant Relationship

On the other hand, it was found out that there is no significant relationship between the respondents' attitude and their demographic profile. The attitude of the faculty members in recognizing the mental health of the students is not associated with age, marital status, educational attainment or even length of teaching.

DISCUSSION

The faculty members who were respondents of the study are mostly young and middle-aged adults. Those

who belong in these age groups are expected to be mostly married since the average age of a married Filipino is 29 for men and 27 for women (Mapa, 2019). Teaching in a tertiary education requires postgraduate degrees as per mandate by the Commission on Higher Education. Teachers with greater years of experience are more effective in supporting student learning (Kini & Podolsky, 2016) and with majority of the respondent’s having 5 or more years of teaching in MSU-IIT; they may have already gained sufficient experience in dealing with students.

The study revealed that most of the respondents are familiar with depression followed by anxiety and bipolar disorder as the most common form of mental health issues respectively. The result can be attributed to the fact that according to WHO (2020) depression is one of the most common mental health problems which affects almost 300 million people worldwide. As role models in school, teachers’ knowledge on the concepts of mental health has a great impact on recognizing mental health issues among students (Abd El Latif *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, teachers' awareness of their role is important to the lives of students, even more, important in addressing the mental health concerns of each student (Breuer, 2016). It was investigated that the teacher's supportive role in the student's life is a factor in reducing the depressive symptoms in students as well as determining indicators of mental health decline (Pössel, Smith & Alexander, 2018). In a recent study by Miller and colleagues (2019), it was found out that teacher depression literacy was significantly associated with student depression literacy. Hence, is crucial for faculty members to continue enhancing their knowledge in mental issues and impart them to their students.

The data gathered presented that during the past two (2) years, most of the respondents have inadequate training on mental health including workshops, conferences, continuing education, or any kind of in-service training. The result is supported by the study of Abd El Latif and colleagues (2018) of which 88% of the respondents received inadequate training in dealing with mental health issues. Teachers expressed their feelings towards the responsibility of the school in supporting the student's mental health needs with them having a specific role in this aspect, yet they lack adequate training to promote students' mental health. In order to transport effective practice to schools or universities, there should be a need to conduct effective training for educators who believed that they have a specific role in meeting the

mental health needs of the students (Brzycki, 2016). Overall, faculty members showed willingness to help students with mental health problems. Compassion and showing concern are attributes of an effective educator (Peterson-Deluca, 2016).

Similar result was also found in the study of Abd El Latif and colleagues (2018) relating to barriers in promoting mental health like insufficient training in the recognition of early signs and symptoms of mental health issues and too much workload. Most educators also agree that stigma is a main barrier in the delivery of mental health promotions for the students (Froese-Germain & Riel, 2012).

Faculty members with higher educational attainment tend to be more knowledgeable regarding mental health issues. The survey shows that those respondents who were older-adults have not received any skills training at all. Older educators may tend to feel weary in attending long tedious seminars, especially the ones with larger crowds and which are less interactive towards the participants. In addition, the majority of the married respondents also answered that they have not acquired mental health skills training for the past 2 years. Raising a family can be a challenge especially in managing personal and professional timelines. Struggle is indeed present among faculty members amidst work schedule, personal time and family time. Lastly, skills come with experience and it is shown by the results where most of those with more than five years' experience in teaching answered that they have been to various training regarding mental health. This result resonates with the study of Froese-Germain & Riel (2012) wherein knowledge and skills training in identifying and understanding mental health problems among students is the top priority for professional development of educators.

It is recommended that the institution develop faculty focused mental health promotion programs emphasizing assessment and skills enhancement in dealing with students undergoing mental health issues. In addition, faculty members are encouraged to be more pro-active in attending seminars and workshops relating to mental health issues. With the rising issue of depression and other mental health issues around the country and the world, teachers can take their role a step forward and help promote mental health in the classroom by attending or organizing programs on the matter. It is also recommended to expand this present study through qualitative research to look more in-depth into the barriers affecting the promotion of mental health within the academe.

CONCLUSION

After gathering and analyzing sufficient data, the researchers concluded that there is a significant relationship between the selected demographic profile and the respondents' knowledge and skills. It is important that mental health activities be promoted inside the campus and that educators have a significant role to play in promoting and addressing mental health. Hence, it is important for the institute to recognize and take action on enhancing the promotion of mental health in the campus through the faculty which can further help achieve the MSU – IIT's mission and vision.

Conflict of Interest:

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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